

Welcome to the MEG Newsletter 1/2011

Editor

Welcome to the first edition of the MEG Newsletter for 2011. There have been so many interesting activities and developments in recent months that it was impossible to fit them all in. However, you will find a selection of exciting news items set out briefly below, followed by some more in-depth articles from our students.



Firstly, in late September 2010, we welcomed the new generation of MEG students, MEG 6, to the University of Freiburg. As in previous years, competition for places in the course was extremely high, with only 27 students selected from over 125 full written applications, and many more online applications. The new MEGs come from 20 different countries and represent every inhabited continent on Earth - once again affirming the truly international nature of the program.

The new MEG 6 students were quick to get fully immersed in the program, and, in November, participated in an excursion to Frankfurt and Eschborn to visit the offices of the German Development Corporation, the GTZ (now incorporated within the GIZ). The students also had the opportunity to

visit German Development Bank, *KfW Entwicklungsbank*, and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange. The students engaged in many interesting lectures and discussions on the trip, but perhaps the greatest benefit was the chance to make contacts for future internship and employment opportunities.

The graduation ceremony for the 4th generation of MEGs was also held in November. The graduates celebrated this occasion at the historic and atmospheric Peterhofkeller, along with their colleagues from MEG, and other international masters programs offered by the Faculty. The night was a joyous celebration, but was also tinged with sadness as it marked the completion of the program for the MEG 4s.



The MEG 6 class was back in the thick of things in December, as they intrepidly trekked deep into the wintery heart of the Black Forest for a series of workshops and skill sharpening exercises on the intricacies of team work in a multicultural setting. In what has now become an annual event, the MEGs were treated to the warm hospitality of the Uni-Haus on Schauinsland Mountain.



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In February, the lucky MEG 6 class was back on the road, this time to walk the corridors of power at the United Nations in Geneva. The trip, which was provided courtesy of the MEG Program, took in visits to the *Palais des Nations* to hear talks from organisations such as UNEP, UNCTAD, and the WTO, and also to neighbouring Gland to hear from the IUCN and WWF. The excursion was a real eye opener for the MEG students. It provided many opportunities for thought provoking and meaty discussions with some of the powerbrokers of international environmental governance, and also more excellent opportunities to network.

Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance 2011

By Hugo Rosa (MEG 5, Brasil)



One of the most exciting (and challenging) aspects of the MEG program is the preparation of the Student Organised Event (SOE). This year's SOE, also

known as the Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance, is entitled "*Inspiring Change Towards a Green Economy*" and will be held on 25 and 26 February 2011. Whilst the SOE is listed in the MEG curriculum as just an ordinary study module, it is anything but. In this article, I will fill you in on exactly what it took to transform the SOE from a mere concept to a fully fledged environmental conference.

Our preparations began on 30 November 2009, with our SOE kick-off meeting. At this meeting, fuelled by excellent cakes baked by MEG Program Director, Prof. Michael Pregernig, we held our first brainstorming session about possible topics.



On December 12, the class climbed the mountains of the Black Forest to get together for a weekend workshop at the Universitätshaus on Schauinsland. Our aim was to refine the ideas we had developed at the kick-off meeting and narrow our topic possibilities. The weekend was a landmark for our fledgling group. We were able to decide upon the three final "candidates" for a topic, but the outcome of the weekend was so much more than this. We returned to Freiburg as a much closer and stronger collective, after debating, sharing meals and just chilling together. Some of us (including me) even had their first sight and feel of snow!

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After all the debate at the workshop, we felt ready to make a decision on the final topic. However, the process was not simple. In fact, we needed to employ a multi-level decision making method that involved evaluating the topics according to a series of criteria we had defined during the workshop. With the help of our statistics expert, Alanus von Radecki, we finally established that the topic that best suited our criteria for an interesting and engaging event was, *"Governance in the Green Economy"*. However, we quickly realised that this decision was merely the beginning of our journey. After all, such a broad theme required much more refinement and narrowing down. This proved to be our task for many months to follow!

The first step towards refining the topic was the preparation of individual academic papers focussing on specific aspects of our "umbrella" theme. This task was carried out during the break between the first and second semester.



The next step in the process was the preparation of pitches on the best approaches for presenting the chosen topic as an environmental forum. We delivered our pitches at a day-long meeting on May 7, 2010. At this sometimes heated meeting, we engaged in long and rich discussions about the advantages and disadvantages



of the different specific topics and approaches proposed. The pitch-round was also a forum for debating procedural and organisational details and the format of the event.

Shortly afterwards, on 17 May, we finally decided upon our cherished final topic *"Inspiring Change Towards a Green Economy."* With the topic in our hands, it was time to dive into the details of the organisation of the event.

One of our first decisions was to split the class into seven committees in order to efficiently divide the workload and enable decisions to be made quickly on small matters. During the summer semester, the class dealt with pressing issues such as deciding upon the key speakers, funding, catering, event format, desired audience and venue, and all other issues involved in the challenging but rewarding task of organising the SOE.

At the beginning of July, the class participated in another "conclave" outside the grounds of the university. This time it was held at the Mathislehütte, a cabin owned by the Forestry Faculty in the Black Forest. The purpose of this meeting was to plan the SOE related work which needed to be completed in the upcoming months, in recognition of the fact that we would all soon be departing Freiburg for our internships and therefore would have limited time to work on the SOE. It was another very produc-

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tive and fun meeting. We managed to define important milestones for the committees as we simultaneously prepared to spread ourselves around the world, safe in the knowledge that our event was well and truly on course!

In November 2010, we were all back from our internships and ready to engage in the final phase of preparations for the SOE. Although the time left until the date of the event seemed extremely short to us, we managed to determine vital issues such as the types of sessions we wanted to have, the speakers to be present, the participants to be invited, the side events, the social activities to be offered and so on. The work in the winter semester was focussed on the specific details of the event organisation. However, as is often said, the devil is in the detail. The last month proved to be the most challenging of all, not only because of the large amount of small, but extremely relevant, issues to be solved, but also because we now had to learn how to work effectively under a high level of pressure.

In the end we managed to work through all the difficulties of this situation. Now we hope to present you with two exciting and inspiring days. Our reward for all the hard work and time invested in the event will be to see you, the participants, walking out of the SOE on 26 February with a much broader view on existing and upcoming initiatives that will shape our economy in future decades. Perhaps you will even leave with your own new vision, and energy, to bring about change.

Despite the fact that many of us have prior experience in organising events, the whole process of preparing the SOE was an enormous learning experience for all. It was truly a unique experience. Never be-

fore had we been asked to carry out a task of such magnitude, in such a large multicultural group, in a foreign country (for most of us) and without any form of hierarchical organisation. We come out of this process not only stronger as a group, but, as individuals, more prepared to face the challenges that lie ahead of us after we leave our idyllic Freiburg and face (again or for the first time) professional life. Without any doubt, the SOE experience has been one of the most valuable aspects of the MEG program!

Sabine and Leo



After three years working as the MEG Module Coordinator, Sabine Reinecke has left to finalise her PhD. In January 2011, Sabine's position was filled by Leonora Lorena. The two met for a short tête-à-tête about their jobs and latest adventures.

L: Sabine, how did you end up becoming the MEG module coordinator?

S: Well, I started working for the MEG program pretty soon after I graduated from MEG in January 2008. I thought it would be a great opportunity to bridge the gap until something completely new came along. Of course, it was also nice to have some real cash coming in after 7 years of permanent study without any scholarship (but many night jobs). Honestly, at that time, I never dreamt that I would end up working for the program for almost 3 years.

In the very beginning, I was just asked to help out with "one" lecture and assist with a "few" administrative tasks. However, when Prof. Schanz, the previous director of the program, was appointed Vice Rector of the University, he needed somebody who was available immediately (like, the next day), and knew the program almost as well as he did, to fill the gap (along with Rainer Hummel). In that way, that "one"

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lecture turned into quite a number, and the “few” tasks became a hell of a lot more. I think perhaps I had seen too many movies like “*Mission Impossible*”, as I could not resist the offer to become the new spider in the web – an analogy I like to (mis)use when explaining what I was doing for the MEG program!

L: What are your best memories of your work with the MEG program?

S: That’s hard to decide, but I would definitely say they would involve working with the students. Even when I was studying MEG myself, I felt this was the strongest part of the whole concept - gathering together 20 to 30 students from all over the world with various cultural, academic and professional backgrounds. That is absolutely what makes you learn the most – particularly when you are on the “other side,” as a lecturer or administrative staff. It’s like being “in the world” when you are just in a classroom or on an excursion with the students. It’s just really rewarding!

L: What are you up to now?

S: At the moment I am simply euphoric about my new tasks. Although I really miss being involved in MEG (well, the truth is that I will still contribute to a few lectures) my new obligations are something quite different. I now have the chance to really press ahead with my PhD thesis. Unfortunately, I had treated my thesis rather like a “poor cousin,” in favour of my duties with the program. However, I now have a great opportunity to be involved in a project at the Institute of Forest and Environmental Policy until the end of 2011. It investigates the REDD+ mechanism and the possible synergies between climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation policies, at various levels of governance, in devel-

oping countries. My focus will be the newly inaugurated REDD+ Partnership which will hopefully allow these synergies to blossom. It is an interesting topic from an environmental governance perspective, and involves a network based approach (past students who remember the sociology module will understand my excitement).



S: What about you Leo, how did you end up with the job?

L: Well, to be honest, it was quite unexpected too. I was working for a sustainability agency in Freiburg called *aiforia* when I received Prof. Pregernig’s call in November 2010. Until then, I had never considered the possibility of contributing to the “other side” of the MEG Program. However, after the interview, the more I thought about it, the more I realised how much I would like to be part of this on-going project. The opportunity was also in line with my “2011 wish list,” which included finding a job where I could feel connected to the people with whom I work, and to have more time for myself and my parallel projects (such as the Portuguese theatre group and learning German). When I received the positive response, I was very happy and excited!

S: How have your first weeks of work been?

L: It’s been great! You gave me a wonderful introduction on how to be a “spider MEG” and the MEG team has also been extremely supportive, especially Ms. Mattheiß, who is my “institute buddy” and has helped me a lot during the first month. In addition, the students always keep me on track regarding CampusOnline problems and other student issues. Despite all of this, there are still some things I have to learn about managing the “MEG web,” so it is good that you are still just “around the corner” in case of emergency.

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S: What do you enjoy most about your new job?

L: One aspect is the fact that the MEG program is an on-going project, where there are always things to improve and change. The students play an important role in this development, because it is mostly through their experience, opinions and ideas that we can evolve. One of the challenges of my new role is making sure that their feedback is taken into consideration.

Another aspect that I appreciate is definitely, as you said, being with the MEG-gies. With MEG 5, I've had the pleasure of attending their final SOE meetings and of helping them a little bit. It is wonderful to see how they managed to put it all together (I'm really proud of them!). In regard to MEG 6, I had the honour of being part of the critical jury for their SOE Pitch Round. I was amazed by their creative ideas, such as doing a theatre performance, writing a book, making a documentary and even creating a garden! More recently, we went on the Geneva excursion together, and it was good to get to know them a little bit better.

Environmental Education in Cambodia

By Katharina Nowak (MEG 5, Germany)



I wanted to do something different – that was all I knew when I first started to think about my MEG internship at the

end of the first semester. I had already done a couple of office-based work place-

ments related to environmental affairs after my undergraduate studies and was therefore looking for a more inspiring, hands-on experience, beyond the boundaries of an office.



The Global Education Network of Young Europeans (GLEN) seemed to offer just that. In fact, it ended up being so much more than I could have ever imagined. The unique thing about GLEN is that it combines practical environmental education work in the global South with an inner-European exchange. This makes for a far-reaching multicultural learning experience that is truly eye-opening and which challenges existing thought patterns and mindsets.

The program started off with two training seminars where around 65 young Europeans from eleven countries gathered to prepare themselves for their stay abroad. I had the pleasure to work with a Hungarian called Adam who was set to be my “partner-in-crime” during the GLEN program. We reflected on our own role in the world through different participatory learning methods, which aimed to equip us with the necessary skills for our teaching project.

These seminars also facilitated inter-cultural dialogue and awareness of the many contradictions existing in the world around us – for example, how it came to be that I was going to teach environmental education in a Cambodian state high school when nothing of the sort ex-

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ists in the schools of my home country Germany (which claims to be a pioneer in environmental protection).



I started my internship with these controversies in mind, but before too long I was fully absorbed in the Cambodian culture.

This Southeast Asian country seemed to me a contradiction in itself – somehow distant and aloof, yet warm and welcoming; beautiful and provocative, yet tragic with an intriguing history full of extremes. The magnificent heritage of the ancient Khmer civilisation has been clouded by the bleakness of the 20th Century, during which the country decayed under foreign armies, ideologies and internal oppression, culminating in the barbarism of the Khmer Rouge and one of the most savage genocides in human history.

The new, fragile Cambodia is still one of the poorest countries in the world and struggles with food shortages, blatant corruption and the unjust and destructive exploitation of its natural resources. Yet the Khmer people I met were full of hope, warmth and integrity, and determined to build a new tomorrow. They touched me in a way that nothing ever had before.

Teaching at Samdech Euv High School in Siem Reap, near the famous temples of Angkor, was a very fruitful learning experi-

ence. It was characterised by disparity, communication barriers and yet fulfilment. Khmer teachers earn US\$40 a month, working at least 6 days a week from 7am til late. In addition, they invariably have side jobs to make ends meet. On the other hand, I received €300 per month for teaching only four hours per day, and only on weekdays. Most of the students had great difficulty in answering me when I asked them what they had eaten for lunch, and then I had to figure out a way of explaining the Greenhouse Effect to them.

One of the most rewarding moments was when one of my students wrote me a good-bye letter saying that he now realises that everything is interconnected and that all his day-to-day actions have an impact on the environment. Another rewarding moment came towards the end of our stay, when the principal of the high school asked us to draft a curriculum on key environmental issues to be taught by Khmer teachers from next year on.



Overall, my GLEN experience really changed the way I see the world and helped me to connect with the human dimension of environmentalism, which is sometimes easily overlooked.

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Early impressions of MEG

By Andrew Chilombo (MEG 6, Zambia)



I happen to be the first Zambian to study the MEG program, and the only African student in the MEG 6 class. When I realised this, I felt that I was making history!

I am participating in this program thanks to a German Academic Exchange Program (DAAD) scholarship for young professionals from developing countries.

I began my life as a MEG student on a positive note. I arrived in Germany at Frankfurt airport on 2 August 2010. On the train from Frankfurt to Freiburg, I realised I had dropped the piece of paper where I had written the name and phone number of Mari, a MEG 4 student who had offered to pick me up at the Hauptbahnhof (main train station). I was seated next to a girl who had a Blackberry phone. I asked if she spoke English and if I could use her phone to check my e-mail to retrieve the number of Mari. She smiled and responded in English and let me use her phone not only to check my e-mail but also to make a call.

When I arrived in Freiburg, Mari was at the Hauptbahnhof to pick me up. She took me to register at the Language Centre and later accompanied me to my apartment. I was impressed by the generosity of heart of the girl on the train and Mari. I did not have difficulties in getting started because things were well organised. I was very impressed. Students that I met generally spoke good English and were helpful. It was quite easy to get by.

Another impressive thing that caught my eye as I rode from Frankfurt to Freiburg was the German infrastructure. The roads were good and clean. In Germany, there are a great deal more tall buildings than in my country, and public transport is developed far beyond any reasonable comparison.

I appreciated the beautiful buildings, however I began to notice other differences between Germany and Zambia. For starters, people here seemed so busy. It seemed to me like time was sometimes more important than interacting with others. German public transport drivers were the most time conscious people that I had ever seen. On public transport, people laughed rarely and appeared serious or stressed. They read novels or papers, but I often wondered if they were actually taking in what they were reading. The surprise of my new surroundings awakened me to the fact that I was learning something new in a new country and with a people who had a history and culture very different to my own.

Towards the end of September the MEG study program began with the Sustainability and Governance (S&G) module. I felt that it really was a keynote for the whole MEG program, opening my eyes to the challenges of modern development and the scale and complexity of the environmental problems the globe is currently facing.

In the MEG program, we are now 26 students coming from 19 countries. Our academic backgrounds are also extremely varied. On one hand, there is an inexhaustible fountain of experiences and knowledge from which you can be enriched. On the other hand, the diverse nature of the group means that we all have different expectations, understandings and prejudices to deal with. It is particularly hard for those of us who have had no prior contact with other cultures. With time I have learnt so much from my colleagues. In my opinion, though dif-

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ferentiated by our backgrounds, we are one in our values, goals and anxieties about the future. We all want to make the world a better place.

When it comes to the academic standards of the MEG program, I am fully satisfied. The MEG administration is very committed and does all that is humanly possible to make our studies a success. In the context of Zambia's sustainable development, MEG is surely a perfect program for me. My country needs to reduce reliance on the mining industries and to diversify our economic options, which are environment dependent. Policy making and implementation is an integral part of this diversification process.

The MEG class is motivated and we all seem to be having a great time. The program is structured in 3 week blocks. This keeps us busy because we always have assignments and lots of readings to do, and we have to prepare for an exam every three weeks. It is a marathon program. I like working in groups because this is an opportunity to get to know others better and to share knowledge.

Something special about our MEG 6 generation is that the *esprit de corps* is vibrant. At the end of each module we have a tradition of sharing dinners with food we have prepared from our home countries. Whenever we can, we also have group outings to clubs to dance. These are moments for letting off steam!

Nonetheless, adjusting to life in Freiburg has not all been plain sailing. As an African student, accustomed to my own culture, I have realised that there is a need to be patient, understanding and tolerant with some people as I fit into life in Germany. For example, I have discovered that for

some here, knowledge of Africa seems to be limited to what is portrayed in Hollywood films or sensationalist news broadcasts. I am often amused by questions asking how I protect myself from "man-eating" animals back home, whether I have fled warzones, whether I know how to operate common household appliances, and, stranger still, whether I am African American because I speak English. At other times, I have had to deal with clear prejudices.

Time and again, I have had to explain that Zambia is one country in Africa, and Africa is a continent. Realities in Africa cannot be explained by the realities in my country. For example, I have never fought any tribal war and do not think it will ever happen in my country. I am here as a student, not as a war refugee. Zambia is not representative of the whole continent. It is sometimes a struggle to get this message across. At least, it seems, basic knowledge of African geography has been improved by the recent football World Cup in South Africa!

Looking back at what I have experienced so far, it is great fun to be in Freiburg as a student. It is a safe city and offers all you need as a student. For prospective students, I would say that it is important to keep your expectations realistic, but you surely will meet wonderful people. Spending Christmas in a Portuguese family was one of my greatest moments in Freiburg so far. This was organized by the International Office of the University.

To make the most of life here, especially when you are from a community based, "*I am because we are*," cultural background like mine, it is important to remain open and realise that social interactions are different in Germany. Loneliness can be a reality. When you get surprised or shocked by what you encounter, remain calm and be happy, because you have learnt something new, and knowledge is better than ignorance!

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I hope this article will benefit any future student from Sub-Saharan Africa, because some people here, who have not interacted meaningfully with people from the continent, will understand and relate with you in the frame of what is presented by the media. It hurts sometimes, however, it helps to believe and trust that most people, although perhaps ill-informed, are well-intentioned. I have got by in this way.

This is an account of my personal experience, not to be taken as a norm, but maybe not as an exception either.

Wrapping up MEG

By Catherine Mungai (MEG 4, Kenya)



What will you do after school? Start a PhD or get a job? What are your plans? What next? Will you stay in Germany or go home? Are you sure you will get a job?

Once concerned relatives and friends started asking me these unnerving questions (I say unnerving because I had no concrete responses) it dawned on me that my exciting life as a master student was finally coming to an end! This is a story about the last six months of the MEG program. The time when the question, “*what next?*” was always on my mind, and the answer always elusive.

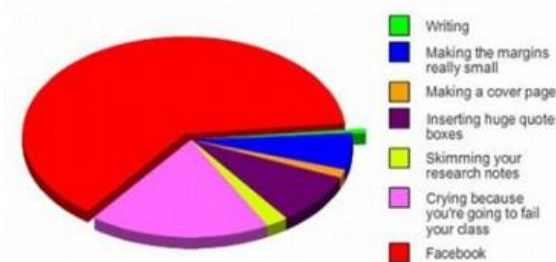
While this question gave me sleepless nights at times, most of my attention was focussed on grappling with the immediate challenge of finishing my thesis. The last six months of the program were very intense. Somehow the days were just too short. It was if, instead of having 24 hours, the day now had only 14! This was

definitely the time to develop and sustain the skill of self-discipline.

Fortunately for me, during my internship I was able to identify a suitable topic for my thesis: “*gender and climate change*”. So once I sorted out the administrative, supervision and host institution issues, I was good to go! I started out with much zeal, and I thought that it would last.

Alas, this was not to be. The process of writing my thesis was like the action of a yoyo – up and down. Somedays I would have so much energy and motivation to work, but on other days I would stare at the same page for ages without coming up with anything important to write! Adding to this problem were the occasional irresistible distractions like the urge to travel, movie nights, WG (student house) parties and of course Oktoberfest! I also wanted to spend quality time with my friends considering that we would soon be apart!

Use of time before 15 page essay due in 12 hours



GraphJam.com

The colourful graph above is a true depiction of how I spent most of my days during this time. Just replace “15 page essay” with “*thesis*” and change “*due in 12 hours*” to “*3 months*”, and the picture is complete. As the graph shows (and I honestly admit), I would update my Facebook

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status several times a day, be the first to comment on my friends' status updates and photos, and engage in numerous discussions about anything other than the thesis.

Sometimes I would also be filled with despair, thinking that I would never finish on time! Well, after spending the day agonising about my thesis (and doing nothing concrete about it) it would soon be night and, upon realising I had wasted the whole day, I would spend the whole night writing. Of course, I would then spend the next day sleeping! This was basically the cycle of my life during those last months.

Fortunately, despite all these challenges, I managed to successfully finish my thesis and am now back at home looking for answers to the unnerving questions raised above! Wish me luck!

Errol, Ericka and Environmental Law



Ericka Toledo Zurita (MEG 5, Mexico) interviewed Prof. Errol Meidinger, Director of the Baldy Center for Law & Social Policy at

Buffalo Law School, State University of New York. Prof. Meidinger also teaches environmental law in the MEG program.

Eating *mole* enchiladas in a Mexican restaurant in the south of Germany while talking to an American professor is definitely one of those things that give the MEG program its special trademark.

After eliminating a few basic questions like “*what is the ultimate environmental law*

movie?” and “*what is a lawyer's drink of choice?*,” I had the great pleasure of interviewing Prof. Meidinger.

Before you read the interview below, I would like to share with you just how nice, open and humble he is - unsurprisingly some of the characteristics he admires most in his favourite former teachers. The most important lesson I took from our talk was the good Professor's advice to stay curious, and his reminder that if you wish to master something in life, you must always remain a great student. This is what makes true professionals different - their disposition to keep learning.



First, let's bust the myth: are all lawyers really the devil's advocates? Ha! There are many kinds of lawyers and they can be very different. However, they generally have a duty to put their clients' interests first and to anticipate troubles their clients might have. One way of doing this is to articulate opposing arguments or possible problems so as to test their strength. So that may be one reason people sometimes describe lawyers as devil's advocates.

What inspires people to study environmental law? I think motivations can vary a great deal, but most environmental law students seem to care about the environment. It's also intellectually interesting. A great thing is that after your formal education you have the opportunity to keep learning new things. Indeed, you must, because the field keeps changing. Lawyers are professional learners.

What's your favourite international environmental law case? The Shrimp and Turtle case. It brings together many of the contradictions and challenges of the modern world – for

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Freiburg
Faculty of Forest and Environmental Sciences

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example, using markets to facilitate environmental protection, and using the market power of developed countries to push change in developing ones. It's also about whether we all are fundamentally citizens of the same place, or whether it's more important to be citizens of different places. This is an interesting thing about international environmental law – so many of the basic tensions in our lives come together and play themselves out there.

What environmental crisis do you wish did not happen? Well, all of them! Which one do I particularly wish didn't happen? I suppose climate change, because it's so complex and has such a long time horizon. I wish it didn't happen because I'm not very confident we can deal with it. There are other crises that are more focused and have shorter time frames, that maybe we can handle. But I'm not optimistic about dealing with climate change. I fear we will end up having to adapt, and adapt, and adapt, while still failing to make basic changes in how we live.

Are "good" environmental lawyers naïve or too idealistic? I don't think most environmental lawyers are naïve. I think most of them, the ones that are working for environmental groups, make the choice that they would rather be tilting at windmills, like Don Quixote, than not. But they tend to know how difficult the system is to improve. I admire them because they keep trying. They often devote their lives and work very hard. They suffer defeats many times, but they also achieve successes.

Is studying law fun? Yes! It's fun because you get to discuss so many interesting issues with so many smart and articulate people, both faculty and students. Law students are generally quite capable and confident. They are constantly generating

and advocating interesting positions. Exams aren't so much fun, though.

Are the exams stressful and hard? Yeah, I think so. I often complain about having to write exams and grade them, but of course I would rather do that than take them. Then again, I actually think it sometimes helped me, as a student, to have fun with exams. I often did particularly well when I was relatively relaxed and in sort of a playful mood. If your mind is loose and open, then sometimes you can see things that, if you are tense and overly focused, you don't see or understand.

Who was your favourite teacher? I've been fortunate to have a number of excellent teachers. I'll tell you about two, one in social science and one in law.

The one in social science was Donald T. Campbell. He was a methodologist, a specialist in research design, and recognised as one of the best in the world. He was a big man, very genial, very friendly, sort of bumbling - an "aw shucks" kind of guy. He tended to ramble a bit when he lectured. He often didn't really put together a very compelling story in his lectures, and so it was possible to underestimate him.

Well, I did a bit while I was a student, even though I knew he was famous. But over time I came to understand how great he was, and how very much he taught me. He was willing to think aloud in front of the class. He treated us all as if we might have significant insights to offer. He taught me that an important part of teaching well is simply to demonstrate a high level thought process. He could teach you by sort of telling you a little joke or saying, "you know, I remember this time..."

One of my best law teachers was Harry B. Reese. He was quite traditional and always wore dark three-piece suits with white shirts and plain black ties. He taught what are often thought of as the boring subjects of procedure

and jurisdiction. But he had the capacity to show us the links of those subjects to fundamental structures of government and society. He helped us to see how the requirements for bringing a “class action” lawsuit, for example, could affect what kind of society we would be. He did this almost entirely by asking us questions and forcing us to find our way to answers. He was much more formal than Campbell, but they were similar in that both cared deeply about helping their students to become critical intellects in their own right.

When you introduce students from other backgrounds to environmental law, do you think they have a rigid perspective about law? I think they often may. Therefore, we start the course by raising fundamental questions about the nature of law. I think many people attribute a remarkable level of profundity to law. People often seem to give law greater powers, and greater logical coherence than would seem justified from a scientific standpoint. It may not be that they’re naïve; it may be that there is something in most societies that teaches us to give law a special status. In any case, the result may be a dogmatic perspective on law that can interfere with true understanding if it’s not addressed.

What are your hopes for the MEG Students? My hope is that you all keep this great energy, curiosity and openness that you have, and your joy. And take that out into the world and share it, and try to make the world a better place. I think that would be just great!

Water and agriculture in the Holy Land

Anja Bursche (MEG 5, Germany) completed a Selected Topic module with the Palestinian office of Friends of the Earth Middle East.



White houses and limestone reflecting the January sun, urban sprawl between olive trees, dried banana fields and greenhouses in the desert, and the *muezzin’s* call to prayer at dawn - a would-be country between walls and barbed wire. Doesn’t sound like your average MEG module? Well, let me tell you what writing a Selected Topic paper can look like!

Beyond the complex history and politics of the Middle East, this is a region facing huge environmental challenges, water scarcity above all. The limited water has to be shared not only between Israelis and Palestinians, but also between the agricultural, domestic and industrial sectors – and last but not least, the environment. The groundwater, rivers and lakes of the region are being heavily over-used and polluted.



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Agriculture is the largest freshwater consumer in the region, which has always been a site of intensive agricultural production, and, due to population growth, will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. Israeli agriculture consumes 10 times more water than Palestinian agriculture, and utilises the most cutting-edge irrigation and water supply technologies in the world. Palestinian farmers, on the other hand, struggle with restricted access to water (and land), outdated infrastructure, lack of capital to invest in technological solutions, and, finally, a national government with limited sovereignty, and hence a very narrow capacity to manage water resources.



Diving into this complex reality, in order to identify policy options for agricultural water demand management (for my Selected Topic paper), was an incredibly rich learning experience. By talking to government officials, research institutes, NGOs and farmers, I soon realised that, beyond technical management options, the greatest challenge was to understand the underlying beliefs and mind-sets of the people. Furthermore, I came to the view that what is really going on in the agricultural and water sector in Palestine, is a great struggle between competing worldviews and development strategies, both from within Palestine and abroad. Obviously, the im-

mense complexity of the situation was not something I could fully appreciate within a three week Selected Topic module. However, I think I got some idea of what international environmental governance is all about in practice, even through writing a seemingly technical paper on agricultural water management.

This is what an elective slot in the MEG program can look like, or, if you are better organised than me, a 3 to 6 month internship with Friends of the Earth Middle East. The organisation has offices in Tel Aviv, Bethlehem and Amman, and works on trans-boundary water issues, mainly with neighbouring communities along the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Jordanian border. Their co-operative approach to dealing with shared water resources, and providing environmental education to young people has been a great success. They have also recently been given responsibility to manage several small eco/peace parks in the Jordan River Valley. Being open to internships, Master theses and smaller research interests, I can recommend them to anyone who is interested in the Middle East.

Also, regardless of your intended destination, do consider combining your internship, or one of the longer semester breaks, with a Selected Topic. Learning by doing will enrich your MEG experience, and writing this kind of Selected Topic paper is great practice for the Master thesis.

On gardens & vegetables: Guerrilla style!



*By Melani Pelaez Jara
(MEG 6, Ecuador)*

It is late one Sunday evening when four people meet at the entrance of the train station. Every-

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body brings organic soil, flower seeds, a shovel, or just his/her hands. They start to walk through the city centre and stop by a dimly lit tree. In the dark they spread soil, plant seeds, water and walk away. Two and a half hours of nice conversation, muddy hands, laughter and fun leaves hundreds of small seeds of life buried in the earth throughout Freiburg, waiting for spring to come. They depart, their dirty hands full of hope and commitment to repeat their nocturnal guerrilla gardening activities in the near future.

What is guerrilla gardening?

According to Wikipedia, it means gardening and planting flowers, bushes and even vegetables on another person's land without permission. To us "garden pirates," the "other person's land" is always an ignored and forgotten patch of soil that screams out to grow new green life.

Guerrilla gardening, as a civil society movement, incorporates, amongst others, concepts of self-sufficiency, permaculture, sustainable development and communal gardening and living. Gardeners can act alone or together in local, regional and even international groups. For some of these green activists, the importance of their actions lies in bringing back (quality of) life to the grey, stone-cold cities we live in. For others, it is about learning how to grow their own veggies and be less dependent on supermarkets.

Here in Freiburg, there are many active guerrilla gardeners that have been reclaiming the streets for trees and flowers for many years now. In addition, some new residents in Freiburg have recently been "pimping" the pavement. There are others still, who are keen for more experience and fun in growing their own food.

MEG 6 student, Torben Flörkemeier, is one enthusiastic activist planning to create his own vegetable garden in Freiburg. He kindly answered the following questions for the newsletter.



Why should we bother gardening and growing our own veggies? Isn't it more resource intensive than just buying them in a supermarket? I believe that, as far as possible, we should have direct contact with the production of what we consume on a daily basis. It is important for me to know where the veggies and food I'm eating come from. And, growing your own food is not more resource intensive than buying it, that's just a myth - especially if you use organic gardening techniques. When you grow your own veggies, you eliminate all transportation costs. In addition, the labour costs are very small – it is just me and my leisure time (at least at the moment). In the future, the idea is to get a group of like-minded people together to share experiences and spend time together doing something useful, and have fun at the same time!

What do you need to start? Mainly just helping hands and the desire to have fun creating something and seeing nature grow, while sharing time with your friends.

Have you done this before? My grandparents have a farm with a huge, almost self-sustaining garden. My parents grow their own veggies too. Since I was a kid, I have been gardening and eating fresh vegetables. In Bremen, where I did my bachelor degree, I had a garden but the soil wasn't really appropriate, and, at that time, I didn't have friends who wanted to join the initiative. Here in Freiburg, I have met a lot of people who share the wish to start growing their own vegetables.

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Do you need special skills to join this initiative? No, because you learn it by doing and by having fun. Here we have different people with different experience. We can work together to share and combine our knowledge. For people who are interested in learning about how to grow their own garden, and the concepts behind this, I recommend reading John Seymour, a British author who has written extensively about self-sufficient gardening. Even if you just want to have a small garden, Seymour's books are still interesting and helpful. However, I should point out that while reading this author is a good start, at some point you actually have to get started out in the field.

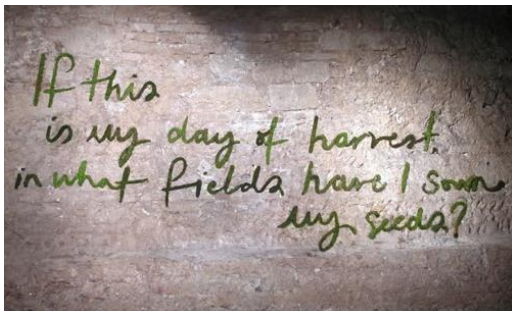


Image: Anna Garforth

What ideas do you have for your own garden in Freiburg? We haven't started yet, but I hope we can get a garden started in April. It would be nice if a lot of people join in to grow some veggies for the summer semester. If it works really well, I can imagine organising something like gardening workshops for the MEG Student Organised Event for 2012.

If you want to learn more about guerrilla gardening there is a lot of great information available on the net. Or, if you plan to do some of your own field research, feel free to contact us. We can perhaps meet for a nocturnal guerrilla gardening walk!

You know you're international when...

By Wansiri "Topsi" Rongrongmuang (MEG4, Thailand)



If you are a member of the MEG family, you will easily be able to complete the sentence fragment in the title of this article. The MEG program is truly international and opens students' eyes and minds to the world. The slogan of the MEG program, Shape. Complex. Futures, affirms the international nature of the program. The world is very complex and the program aims to provide its students with the necessary tools to handle every complexity they will face in the "real world" outside university.

Returning to the sentence fragment in this article's title, I will now try elaborate what it means to be international. I consider myself international, and therefore well qualified to make this elaboration, as I used to work in several international organisations and I have studied the MEG program. So, in my view, you know you are international when...

"...you use English every day in any form of communication." English is claimed to be the most widely used global language. Two people from different countries usually start their conversation in English before they realise that they both are, for instance, native Spanish speakers. Many countries composed of a variety of races have English as their official language. If you are comfortable communicating in this global language, you are qualified to be international.

"...you can say "hello" in several different languages." If you have had true intercontinental exposure, this simple word should have passed through your ears in several different

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languages. I think the real international folk could actually compose a 3 minute song, starting with “Hello”, moving on to “Kon-nichiwa, Ni Hao Ma, Sawasdee, Mambo Wipi, Hola, Hallo...,” and ending with “Ciao”.

“...you hear the name of a food from another country and you know how it looks and tastes.” What do you think of when you hear the words ‘roll’, ‘bun’, ‘brot’, ‘pan’, ‘naan’, ‘baguette’, ‘pao’, ‘pita’ or ‘roti’? I only had ‘bread’ in my dictionary for this type of food when I was younger. Now I know all the different tastes and forms of this international food group. If you also know the meaning of ‘tortilla’, ‘durian’, ‘mabuyu’, ‘cuscus’, ‘halo halo’, ‘ugali’, ‘lasagne’, ‘vegemite’ and ‘udon’, consider yourself truly international.

“...you own some kind of world collection (music, movie, book, painting, etc).” International minds like to seek out differences. Having knowledge of only their own culture is not enough to satisfy their curiosity. A piece of art reveals a hidden cultural context. If you are exposed to elements of another culture, you might like them and want to experience them again – you are then international.

“...you can identify the location of famous places around the globe.” I am not sure everyone will agree with this statement, as this ability might relate more to the quality of your geography teacher in high school. However, if you travel to these

famous places, you will remember them by heart. With only a glimpse of a street corner, you will be able to tell where in the world the place is – and not only by sight, but also by smell, noise, feeling and taste. As you travel more and further, you become more international.



“...you are used to interacting with people from all the inhabited continents of the world.” The MEG program is a good example! In my class there were 19 students coming from 15 different countries and every inhabited continent. We shared knowledge through class discussions and personal experiences. Outside the class, we had international parties where people cooked food from their own countries and explained how to eat it. We even had weekly international movie nights.

I could go on and on with this topic, but space in this newsletter is limited. So, in conclusion, if, after reading the above, you can say “yes, that all sounds like me”, you are truly international and quite ready to Shape. Complex. Futures!

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Sharing still a little bit of my

OLD MEGGLE WISDOM

(yes, the time comes for everybody)

BY MARICARMEN RIVERO
MEG 2010

HI THERE! WELL, I NEVER THOUGHT THIS DAY WOULD ARRIVE SO FAST, BUT HERE IT IS. IT'S TIME TO REALLY SPREAD SOME EXPERTISE ON THE MATTER OF BEING A MEG STUDENT. THIS MAY BE MY LAST NEWSLETTER (AT LEAST AS A STUDENT). I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO SHARE SOME OF THE BEST MOMENTS I HAVE LIVED IN THE PAST 2 YEARS. MANY ADVENTURES AND NEW EXPERIENCES. WHO KNOWS? PERHAPS SOME OF THEM REMIND YOU OF YOUR OWN ADVENTURES...

FOR INSTANCE, AFTER 20 YEARS OF ABSENCE, I RELEARNED TO RIDE A BIKE



FURTHERMORE, I WENT FROM A CITY TO ANOTHER WITH THE BIKE!

• BREISACH
• FREIBURG

OK, IT WAS ONLY BREISACH, NOT SO EXTRAORDINARY, BUT YOU DID READ THE PART WHERE I SAID I COULDN'T RIDE A BIKE BEFORE, RIGHT?

I HAVE ALSO IMPROVED MY GERMAN.

Before...
"Ein Milchkeffe, bitte..."

After...
"Hallo! Ich hätte gerne einen Milchkeffe, bitte. Zum Mitnehmen!"

NOT THAT I'M PROUD OF IT, BUT I DID FALL INTO A BACHELOR TWICE...



DON'T LEAVE FREIBURG UNTILL YOU HAVE!

IN THE MEG, I READ MORE SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES AS EVER BEFORE IN MY LIFE...



CAND STILL I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO ANSWER WHEN PEOPLE ASK ME WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

I WAS ALSO SO BAD AT MY FIRST ATTEMPT TO SKI, THAT THEY HAD TO DRAG ME BACK TO THE LIFT AND SEND ME DOWN



Weg down

BUT IN THE END, AFTER MANY ATTEMPTS, I MANAGED IT!



OK, I DON'T THINK I'LL JOIN THE MEXICAN WINTER OLYMPIC TEAM ANY TIME SOON. BUT I DON'T FEEL INTIMIDATED BY THOSE 5 YEAR OLD SKIERS ANYMORE

I HAVE BECOME SORT OF AN EXPERT IN GERMAN WASTE MANAGEMENT

Where does this one go?
Hello? Obviously Rest-Müll!!



AND I JUMPED INTO THE LIMMAT RIVER (THE ONE THAT GOES THROUGH ZÜRICH) WITH NOTHING BUT A GIANT RUBBER DUCK AND MY BATHING SUIT



OH! THAT WAS FUN!!!

I DANCED AND SANG TO AN AFRICAN SONG IN SWAHILI, IN FRONT OF CLASSMATES AND FACULTY MEMBERS...



Malaka... Nakupenda... Malaka...

THIS, OF COURSE, ALONG WITH A MULTI-CULTURAL GROUP OF BEAUTIFUL ARTISTS!

I TALKED INTO ONE OF THOSE TABLE MICROPHONES... AT THE U.N.!!



Test, test... one, two, three

I WENT BACKPACKING TO THE NORTH OF EUROPE IN WINTER, AND ATE NOTHING BUT KÄSEBROT FOR 10 DAYS



Stockholm -6°C
Käse-brot

I SHARED A FLAT WITH 15 PEOPLE!!!



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